

Rockin With Region 4



By Lynn Wiley, Ph.D.

VDOE T/TAC @ George Mason University

Welcome New Staff Members!

Fall is here; we can feel change in the air and see it in the beautiful colors of the leaves on the trees around us. Our T/TAC staff has changed over the past few months, too. I am excited to introduce three new additions to our team. Please

welcome them with open arms when you talk with them over the phone or meet them at upcoming events.

Sandra Price comes to us from Norcross, Georgia, where she worked for Sportime, a School Specialty company. Some of you may be most familiar with one of their divisions, Abilitations. Sandra is our new Administrative and Office Support Specialist, so it is her voice that you will most likely hear on the other end of the phone when you call our T/TAC office. She has jumped right into the hectic daily routine of keeping all of the coordinators running on schedule, entering our data, proofreading, and assisting in so many additional ways that she has already made herself indispensable. Most importantly, she takes great pride in meeting the needs of the educators in Region 4, whether it is through support of a training event or helping an individual caller on the phone. Sandra, we are so happy you are here!

Soojin Jang is our new Assistive Technology Coordinator. Along with Estela Landeros, she will respond to AT needs in our region and throughout the state. Soojin received her B.S. in Computer Science from Seoul Women's University and her Masters in Special Education from Dankook University, both in Korea. Her master's thesis was on applying AT assessment for students with severe disabilities. She received her certificate in assistive technology from George Mason University in 2007. During her certificate program, Soojin has been working as a graduate assistant for our T/TAC, in the area of AT while also assisting an adult with disabilities who is one of our student workers. Additionally, Soojin has 8 years of teaching experience at the elementary level in computer science. We are thrilled

to have her join our team, and we know you will be thrilled as well, when you have the chance to meet and learn from her! Welcome, Soojin!

Diane Loomis is our new Transition Coordinator, replacing Dan Bublitz, who left for the Department of Rehabilitative Services last spring. Diane received her B.A. in Music from Florida State University, her M.S. in Deaf Education from the University of Tennessee, and her Ph.D. in Education, Curriculum, and Instruction from George Mason University in 2007. Diane has a wealth of experience in the area of special education and disabilities. She has spent many years working for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in Washington, D.C. Her responsibilities there included, but were not limited to, managing a federal grant project on disabled persons in education, conducting personnel preparation workshops, developing training materials, and conducting research that culminated in the publication of a book entitled, "Training of Regular Educators for Education of the Handicapped: In Small Liberal Arts Colleges and On Accreditation Standards for Teacher Education Programs." Diane has also been an assistant professor at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. She was director of the university music program for deaf and hard of hearing students. She taught a variety of classes in the music department, coordinated all details of the program, supervised instructors, and was the recipient of 11 grants from private and governmental sources. Diane also organized and directed the First and Second National Conference on Music and the Hearing Impaired at Gallaudet University. Diane was an Editorial Associate of the Educational Researcher from 2002 – 2003. We are excited to have Diane with us and have big plans to use her expertise to the fullest!

So, welcome to our new staff members! Please refer to the Contact Information on the back cover page of this T/TAC Telegram for details on how to get in touch with us. We look forward to seeing you at one of our training events this year.

Differentiating Instruction – A Brief Overview

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There is currently an urgent emphasis on the need to differentiate instruction and assessment so that all students have the opportunity to learn content critical to academic success. Most of us have a general idea of what differentiation means. Understanding the specific issues related to differentiating instruction, however, is important if teachers and paraeducators wish to effectively support students and provide them access to the general curriculum.

Carol Ann Tomlinson, in her book *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom* (2003), describes four classroom elements central to differentiating instruction. These elements are content, process, product, and learning environment. Content differentiation refers to a change in the material being used to teach in an effort to provide all students access to the same learning objective. Some examples of differentiated content might be providing a student with a “books on tape” version of a print book or allowing student choice on topics for research within a certain area of content. Process differentiation refers to the opportunities provided for students to make sense of the content. Some examples of process differentiation might be giving students the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups or providing them with graphic organizers for note taking. Product differentiation involves allowing the student a variety of ways to show they know, understand, and can apply what they learned. Ways to differentiate a product, or student work effort, might be to provide options for student projects in order to account for varied interests and learning styles. Another way might be to offer various “check” dates where a teacher can provide feedback on a project’s progress (before the final due date). Learning environment refers to the classroom rules, guidelines, routines, and overall “climate.” It also pertains to how each student in the class is valued for their individual qualities, and how successes, no matter how small, are celebrated.

Another critical factor important to understanding and practicing differentiation involves addressing student traits. These traits include student interests, learning profiles, and readiness to learn the content (Tomlinson, 2003). Considering student interests, both general and content-specific, increases the chance that the student will be motivated to learn. Using a student’s interest can be as simple as asking what a student hopes to learn from a unit of study. It can also be a more elaborate task such as a detailed comparison of two things, one from the content being studied and the other from an area of student interest. A student’s learning profile describes how a student prefers to learn, how a student appears to think or solve problems, and what preferences a student may have related to culture, gender, experience, etc. An example of a classroom where differences in student learning profiles is considered might provide study carrels in the room for independent work. It might also allow students to demonstrate knowledge through a variety of different methods such as writing, illustration, or actual performance. Readiness involves factors that affect the level of preparedness of a student for learning specific content. A student’s ability is one factor in his/her readiness to learn, but there are also a number of others that have an impact on readiness. These include, but are not limited to, previous exposure to the specific content, basic health and safety needs, and individual interests and learning profile. Teachers may support students at various levels of readiness by making themselves available outside of class time to help anyone who may be struggling with content. Also, teachers may carefully review assessments that have been done on students during the previous school year in order to check achievement in prerequisite knowledge that is critical for learning the current year’s curricular material.

In summary, to differentiate instruction means to be responsive to the particular learning requirements of the students in your classroom. Information about individual students, to include their interests, learning profiles, and prior knowledge and skills are taken into account. Students are provided a variety of ways to learn content through a variety of processes, with teachers continually adjusting instruction to ensure that all students work at

an appropriate level of challenge. Learning outcomes are assessed by offering students a variety of ways to demonstrate understanding of content. Finally, the learning environment is one that all student styles and contributions are valued.

This brief overview of what it means to differentiate instruction is meant to provide you with a basis for discussion with your supervising teacher. Ask about your role in the process of differentiation for the students that you support. For more information on differentiation, visit the following web sites:

The Access Center

<http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php/category/differentiated-instruction/>

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

<http://www.ascd.org/portals/site/ascd>

References

Strickland, C. A. (2007). *Tools for High-Quality Differentiated Instruction*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C.A. (2003). *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom: Strategies and Tools for Responsive Teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. A., Hockett, J., & Kiernan, L. (Developers). (2005). *The Common Sense of Differentiation*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.



Librarian's Corner

Jackie Petersen, MLS

VDOE T/TAC at George Mason University



This month we introduce you to a new name for our library, a new look for our library website, a new format for our online library catalog, and a brand new location for our library.

First, we have a new name - the Kellar Library. The Kellar Library is named in honor of

Arthur and Elizabeth Kellar, longtime supporters of the mission of the Kellar Institute for Human disAbilities. The Kellar Library contains the combined collections of the T/TAC lending resources, the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) equipment service, and soon, the new National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) resources. To find information about our library use one of these links: <http://ttac.gmu.edu/> (click on 'KIHD Library') or <http://kihd.gmu.edu/library/> .

The Library webpage is being updated and will contain links to databases, helpful websites, subject guides, lists of new materials added to the collection, and more. It will also be the entry point for our new library catalog, which will go live later this month.

The new library catalog will allow you greater flexibility to search for items in many more different categories than our current catalog. It will also have the ability to loan alternate formats including PDF and Word documents, podcasts, and Extensible Markup Language (XML) files. There will be a "My Library" feature that will allow you to login and see what you have checked out and when it is due back to the Library. Be looking for it in late October.

The Library also has a new physical location. We are now located in Krug Hall, Room 109 on the George Mason University- Fairfax Campus. The new location includes seating for 12, a small group worktable, a computer workstation with internet access, more shelving space, and a conversation/browsing area next to our current journals and new books displays. If you are on the campus, please come by and check out our new space! We are open Monday through Friday from 8:30

am to 4:30 pm.

In person or online, we want you to use the Library.

50 Content Areas for Adolescent Literacy

Fisher, D., Brozo, W.G., Frey, N. & Ivey, G. (2007),
Pearson Education, Inc.

Check out these resources specific to science:

40 Strategies for Integrating Science and Mathematics Instruction – (K-8)

Eichinger, J. (2001), Merrill Prentice Hall

Biology Gateways: Human Circulatory System

Riverdeep Interactive Learning, Inc. (2000)

Chemistry Gateways: Chemistry Toolbox

Riverdeep Interactive Learning, Inc. (2000)

Decisions Decisions: The Environment

Tom Snyder Productions (1997)

Inspiration in Science

Madar, B. (2003), Inspiration Software, Inc

Kidspiration in the Classroom: Standards-Aligned Lesson Plans; Reading and Writing, Social Studies, Science, Math

Chase, M.(2004), Inspiration Software, Inc.

Sammy's Science House

Riverdeep Interactive Learning Ltd. (2006)

Teaching Language Arts, Math & Science to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Browder, D. & Spooner, F. (2006), Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

The Thinking Classroom; Using Inspiration to Meet

Curriculum Standards; Language Arts, Science, Social Studies
Chase, M. (2006), Inspiration Software, Inc.

These resources for literacy instruction in science and other content areas are also available for check out:

Applications of Reading Strategies within the Classroom: Explanations, Models, and Teacher Templates for Content Areas in Grades 3 – 12

Frank, C.B., Grossi, J.M. & Stanfield, D.J. (2006),
Pearson Education, Inc.

Strategies to Enhance Literacy and Learning in Middle School Content Area Classrooms (3rd edition)

Irvin, J.L., Buehl, D.R. & Radcliffe, B.J. (2007),
Pearson Education, Inc.

The Library is here to help YOU, the teachers and schools in Region 4. If you have ideas for how we can foster deeper connections to the teaching community and create a stronger presence for the Library throughout the region, I encourage you to email your suggestions and comments to me at jpetersk@gmu.edu.

